



April 8, 2016

The Honorable Jim Gray, Mayor
Office of the Mayor
200 E. Main St.
Lexington, Ky. 40507

Dear Mayor Gray,

VisitLEX, the community's convention and visitors' bureau, hears firsthand from travelers and meeting planners about what they seek in a city they visit.

One of the top issues is a lively downtown with easy accessibility from the convention center to local attractions, such as historic sites, restaurants, bars, and entertainment. The Town Branch Commons Corridor will provide that access and connectivity, which currently is sporadic and disjointed. Parts of downtown are connected, but other tourist destinations are not.

In addition, with several high-profile half-marathons, the 200-mile Bourbon Chase relay and other race events, fitness is a growing component of the tourism industry. Improving our biking and walking pathways is a strong message to residents and visitors alike that Lexington is serious about going green and staying in shape.

The Town Branch Commons Corridor project, bolstered by a TIGER grant, would boost our tourism efforts in an increasingly competitive market. And the reach would extend beyond Lexington because we work collaboratively to market tourism sites throughout the region.

This added recruiting feature would return investments to the local and state economy. In 2014, visitors to Fayette County spent more than \$1.2 billion in direct expenditures and more than \$1.9 billion in total expenditures. In addition, the industry employed more than 25,000 people in the county.

But the benefits go beyond making Lexington more attractive and welcoming to visitors. Every year, we focus on encouraging our own residents to explore their own backyard through a staycation. What started as a theme during tight economic times has continued because of its popularity. The Town Branch Commons Corridors is a perfect example of what's good for the tourist is also good for the resident.

Sincerely,

Mary Quinn K. Ramer
President